



BMFPD Volunteer Firefighter FAQs

What's it like to be a volunteer firefighter with Boulder Mountain Fire?

People volunteer with BMFPD for many reasons, but why they stay has much to do with how the department works together as a cohesive, highly skilled team to serve the community. BMFPD members take pride in continually growing their skills to be the best possible medical, structure, and wildland first responders. We also continually learn from each other and always have each other's backs, making sure to have some fun and to develop a sense of camaraderie along the way. Members (and Rookies) are encouraged to attend all departmental training sessions in order to maintain required level of skills. When training sessions are scheduled, they are typically held on Wednesday evenings and/or Saturday mornings.

Are there minimum participation standards?

BMFPD volunteer firefighters are not amateurs, but rather "unpaid professionals." As such, BMFPD invests a significant amount of time and money in its volunteer firefighters, including for personal protection equipment, training, medical exams, and more. In return, the department expects volunteers to maintain the following standards each year. These requirements are in place to help ensure that the residents of our district receive the best possible professional emergency medical and fire suppression services.

- Attend a minimum of 20% of calls/year (typically 30 of the 150 calls/year), or (4) 12-hour shifts/month
- Complete a minimum 36 training hours/year
- Be CPR certified (BMFPD provides the training)
- Attend a minimum of 4 vehicle familiarization events/year

How often will I be on call to respond to incidents?

As a volunteer firefighter, you will be on call essentially 365 days a year, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. You are expected to respond when a call drops unless you are unavailable because of work, travel, or personal and family commitments, or because you consumed an alcoholic beverage within the previous 8 hours.

In other words, we do not operate with prescheduled shifts or sleep at the stations the way career agencies do. (However, for those with commitments that can make meeting the minimum call response difficult, we do have a self-assigned shift system that counts toward the minimum standards. This system will be explained during the Rookie Academy.)

How do I find out about calls?

We use pagers and a smartphone app called “IamResponding” to receive emergency calls sent from Boulder County dispatch. Upon completion of the Phase 1 of the Rookie Academy, you will be issued a pager.

Then what happens?

When a call drops, you will head to your assigned duty station (Station 1, 2, or 3) to respond to the scene in the appropriate apparatus (this process will also be explained in more detail during the Rookie Academy). While responding to a call upon completion of Phase I, you will be under close supervision and mentoring in order to ensure your safety. Responding to calls is a fantastic learning experience.

How often will I be paged? How many calls are there in a year?

Boulder Mountain Fire responds to around 150 calls a year. Calls can happen anytime, day or night. Sometimes we’ll go a couple of weeks with no calls, and then we’ll have 3 in a single 24-hour period, or a week with 10 calls. The type of calls we receive in a year breaks down approximately as follows:

- 50% medical
- 15% smoke report/wildland fire
- 10% automotive accidents
- 5% structure fire
- 5% search and rescue
- 5% citizen assist
- 10% other

How long do calls typically last?

The length of time you’ll be out on a call varies significantly. Sometimes you’ll be cancelled before you even make it to your duty station; other times you’ll be on a call for several hours. During a multiday incident, such as a wildfire or flood, you’ll likely work 12-hour shifts. For an actual structure fire, by contrast, you could be on scene for 8 hours or more. On the other hand, most medical calls generally last around an hour.

How will this impact my family?

Being a volunteer firefighter involves committing to spend a lot of time away from home not only for calls but also for training, vehicle maintenance sessions, and business meetings. And we have no idea when a call will drop—the pager can go off just as you’re sitting down for dinner, at 3:00 am, or at noon. It’s important to be transparent with your family about this commitment and ensure they are supportive.